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DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

"BEATA BEATRIX"



Modern Art.

1893.

Spring Number.

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from the painting
in the possession of
Charles L. Hutchinson, Esq
Chicago

MR. HUTCHINSON'S COLLECTION



R. HUTCHINSON has no gallery, his pictures are hung informally about three rooms, front parlor, back parlor and dining-room, and in a singularly effective hall. This hall is very dark and rich in color, being lighted only by small windows which let in patches of sunlight on the floor. Seeing it from one of the other rooms it reminds one of the glimpses caught of quaint, square, Dutch rooms in the back of Pieter de

Hooghe's pictures. Those rooms so provokingly realistic that one wishes as Alice did when she stood before the looking-glass, "If I could only get up and go in and see what's around the corner!" All Mr. Hutchinson's pictures have the air of being thoroughly lived with. They have gradually become a part of their walls, so much so that I was rather sorry than otherwise when I found him building a room to be especially devoted to pictures; not a private gallery, but a library with a top light and dull red walls. However, he is too fond of moving his pictures about for these new walls ever to become stiff and set in effect, and it is true that the other rooms are rather dark, still—with what quiet strength these bits of life "come at you" from their dark back-grounds in the half-light.

A singularly effective light for Rossetti's painted poetry, I found it. Mr. Hutchinson had remarked that he had a Rossetti, as he gave me a card with his house number, but I was not prepared for such a splendid harmony of greens and reds, such a perfect example of the poet and painter of Dante's passion. It was the unexpected that happened when I came down on the

grinding cable line, direct from all Chicago's hardness, to find myself suddenly plunged into an intensely quiet, almost oppressive atmosphere of mediæval mysticism by this vision of immovable repose; a picture of trance, of death, with an influence that affected me like the heavy perfume of a tropical flower. The "Beata Beatrix" is a picture to be seen alone—by itself, by yourself. It would have to be an exquisitely sympathetic soul, one tuned to just your own pitch, to enjoy it with you.

20
This is her picture as she was.
It seems a thing to wonder on,
As though mine image in the glass
Should tarry when myself am gone.
I gaze until she seems to stir,—
Until mine eyes almost avert
That now, even now, the sweet lips part
To breathe the words of the sweet heart—
And yet the earth is over her.

From
Rossetti's
poem,
"The
Portrait."

20
Lo! it is done. Above the long, lithe throat
The mouth's mould testifies of voice and kiss,
The shadowed eyes remember and foresee.
Her face is made her shrine. Let all men note
That in all years (O Love, thy gift is this!)
They that would look on her must come to me.

From
Sonnet IX,
"The Portrait,"
in "The House
of Life."

20
To him who is sensitive to Rossetti's art the picture will speak in all its intensity at first sight. However, it was of interest, afterwards, to learn that its symbolism expressed the passing from earth of Dante's Beatrice, the moment when sounded "The knell that gave his Lady peace." The bird, messenger of death, drops the poppy between the hands of Beatrice, but, to use Rossetti's own words, "the picture is not intended at all to represent death, but to render it under the semblance of a trance in which she is suddenly rapt from earth to Heaven." The sun-dial marks the hour. The back-ground is meant to tell of the desolation of the city Florence after her

death, as sung by Dante. The figures of Love and Dante meet in the deserted streets. Below and in the same frame, but not shown in this copy, is a small, narrow, oblong canvas, the predella, representing the meeting in Paradise, a little picture completely overshadowed by the figure above. The painting is an idealized portrait of Rossetti's wife, Elizabeth Eleanor Liddal, painted after her death, and is the finest thing by him out of England. Of Mr. Hutchinson's other pictures I can not now speak at length. It must be enough this time to say that they "hang together" admirably and that you do not feel he has bought the paintings because they were by so-and-so, but that there is a reason for every canvas.

His list is headed by a fine Franz Hals from the Demidoff collection, and followed a beautiful Palamedes, a "Rembrandt's Studio" by Baron Leys, a Tenier's "Smoker," Watts' "Time, Death and Judgment," and his "Portrait of Joachim," Cuyp's "Portrait of his Father," a copy by Teniers of Titian's portrait of himself, a small but very fine and broad Rousseau from the Secretan collection, and first-class examples of Dupré, Mauve, Daubigny, Diaz, Corot, Dannat, Netscher and Van der Meer, old and young masters living together as brothers,—for their personalities pervade the rooms.

J. M. BOWLES

